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The four Arab countries that have large Palestinian populations are all anxious for any Middle East peace settlement to provide a solution to the refugee problem acceptable to most Palestinians.

Arab States: Concern over Palestinians

Some 2 million Palestinian Arabs are living outside the area they consider their homeland, the bulk of them in four countries—Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Kuwait. These countries are concerned that a Middle East settlement—even if it provides some sort of autonomy for the 1 million Palestinians now living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—may not provide for the resettlement of the Palestinians abroad.

A Palestinian—as defined by the Palestine Liberation Organization—is one who was born (or had ancestors) in the old British mandate of Palestine that existed from the early 1920s to 1948 and included roughly the territory that is now Israel and the West Bank. In general, the exiled Palestinians have tended to maintain their national identity, making them difficult to absorb and sometimes politically troublesome.

Leaders of host governments have noted with alarm statements by Israeli officials, in the context of the Israeli offer of "home rule" to Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, that most other Palestinians should be resettled in the countries where they now live. The host governments worry that this would leave a dangerous residue of dissatisfied Palestinians within their borders. They foresee simmering unrest and perhaps the kind of violence that wracked Jordan in 1970 and 1971 and more recently contributed to the Lebanese civil war.

These leaders have no grand design, and they acknowledge that even under the best circumstances they will be called upon to settle some Palestinians within their borders. But they will want to ensure that such an arrangement takes place within the context of a total peace agreement providing for a solution of the refugee problem that is acceptable to most Palestinians.

Lebanon

Concerns are strongest in Lebanon, where the Palestinian presence has long been a source of political instability. There are probably about 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, although Christian sources say the number may be as high as 600,000. More than 200,000 are registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency as refugees. Some 35,000 to 40,000 Palestinians—mostly Christians—have managed to acquire Lebanese citizenship.

A small number of educated Palestinians have prospered in Lebanon, but the large majority has found it difficult to find permanent employment, and they work at low-wage, marginal jobs. Most of the Palestinians in Lebanon emigrated from Israel before 1967 and have little interest in and few ties to the West Bank. It is among these Palestinians that the rejectionist groups have their largest following.

The Palestinian presence—estimated to be 90-percent Muslim—is deeply resented by Lebanese Christians who consider it vital to preserve the rough balance be-

tween Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. The Christians fear that Palestinian assimilation would inevitably lead to Muslim domination of Lebanon.

Hard-liners among the Christians insist that the only solution to the Palestinian problem is the removal—by force if necessary—of all Palestinians from Lebanon. Many Christian leaders

expressed fear that the Egyptian-Israeli dialogue will result in a partial settlement without satisfactory provisions for the refugees.

Despite their hard-line rhetoric, Christians would probably agree to accept, as part of a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement, the integration of those Palestinians who hold Lebanese citizenship and perhaps a small number of refugees—provided the remainder of the Palestinians were either repatriated to a Palestinian entity or resettled elsewhere.

A settlement that called for the total assimilation of all Palestinians now in Lebanon would almost certainly be resisted forcibly by the Christians. The result might be a resumption of the civil war and increased pressure for partition.

Jordan

Jordan's leaders are also apprehensive about the future of their Palestinian population, the largest in any Arab country. According to most estimates, there are slightly more than 1 million Palestinians out of a total population of 2,018,000 in Jordan.

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Some 626,000 Palestinians in Jordan are classed as refugees; about 213,000 of these people are living in refugee camps. Another 204,000 are displaced persons—Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin who fled the West Bank during and after the 1967 war. Another 200,000 are Palestinians—and their descendants—who arrived in the East Bank before 1948.

Jordan is the only Arab country to have offered citizenship to Palestinian refugees, and many Palestinians have done well on the East Bank. A substantial number of Palestinians have long held government and cabinet positions, and a few Palestinians have served as officers in the armed forces.

The Palestinians are an important part of Jordan's currently booming economy, and their administrative and technical skills will be essential in meeting development goals outlined in the five-year plan.

The relationship between the Palestinians and the West Bank Jordanians, however, has always been an uneasy one, and the Palestinians have never really been integrated into Jordanian society. Most Jordanians fear that the Palestinian population will eventually try to overthrow the Hashemite monarchy and—perhaps with Israeli connivance—seek to establish a Palestinian state on the East Bank.

Syria

There are about 200,000 Palestinians in Syria. Most are integrated into the fabric of Syrian life and many occupy important posts in the media, bureaucracy, and military. About 53,000, however, are still in refugee camps.

The pervasive Syrian security apparatus pays particularly close attention to the Palestinian community and watches carefully for signs of dissidence. Tensions reached a high point during the Syrian-Palestinian fighting in Lebanon, but have eased somewhat recently. The Syrians remain suspicious that several bombing incidents this year may have been inspired by Palestinians.

Syria's firm support of Palestinian rights makes it unlikely that Damascus would agree to settle any significant

number of refugees in Syria unless as part of a comprehensive settlement providing Palestinians with an acceptable degree of independence on the West Bank. The Syrians will probably remain strong advocates of the refugees' right to return to their homeland.

Syrian interest in political stability in Lebanon also makes it probable that Syria would place a high priority on a satisfactory settlement of the Palestinian refugee issue in that country in the context of an overall peace agreement.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

Kuwait has an estimated 200,000 Palestinians—amounting to almost a fifth of that country's population—and there are substantial numbers of Palestinians in other Gulf States. At least 25,000 Palestinians live in Saudi Arabia, and some sources assert the number may be as high as 100,000.

Kuwait's Palestinians are relatively prosperous and careful not to intervene in local politics. They occupy mostly middle-level civil service and management positions. There are also substantial numbers of Palestinian laborers in the oilfields.

Because the Palestinians make up such a large percentage of Kuwait's population, it is highly unlikely that the Kuwaitis would be willing to grant citizenship to more than a handful; about 500 now have Kuwaiti citizenship. The Kuwaitis fear that large-scale integration of Palestinians would substantially alter the country's political complexion and undermine the Sabah family's traditional control.

Kuwait and other Gulf states are, however, well aware that the Palestinians in these states have always been active in Palestinian politics and might cause trouble for their host countries if there were no provision for their integration into a West Bank homeland. Thus, Kuwaiti and other Gulf state leaders will want to see the Palestinian issue resolved so as to lessen or eliminate the possibility of dissident Palestinian action against them.

The Saudis almost certainly share these concerns. They are confident of their ability to control their own Palestinian population—which is largely apolitical—but are apprehensive about the possibility of dissident Palestinians causing trouble in the smaller states of the Persian Gulf.

Distribution of Palestinian Population

	Total Palestinian Population	Refugees Registered With UN	Living in Camps
Israel			
(pre-1967 but including East Jerusalem)	619,000	—	—
Gaza Strip	406,000	333,031	198,860
West Bank	689,000	292,922	74,150
Jordan	1,048,600	625,857	213,420
Lebanon	400,000	201,171	94,980
Kuwait (1975)	204,178 *	—	—
Syria (1975)	204,400	184,042	53,175
Saudi Arabia	25,000	—	—

* Kuwaiti Statistical Abstract lists figures for "Jordanians and Palestinians," but this category is probably almost entirely Palestinian.

The total number of Palestinian Arabs is estimated to be about 3.6 million. Precise figures by country of residence are difficult to obtain. These estimates were derived from a variety of official and unofficial sources. Figures on refugees are from official UNRWA sources.

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